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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9606
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0777
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001013

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/19/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: PROTESTORS GEARING UP FOR LARGE APRIL 20 RALLY IN
CAPITAL

REF: KATHMANDU 1001

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) Large pro-democracy protests continued in terai cities on April 19, day fourteen of the seven-party alliance general strike. Security forces killed four demonstrators in Jhapa District in Eastern Nepal, bringing the total to ten the number of protesters killed during the general strike. The government released CPM-UML leader M.K. Nepal, but arrested over 250 demonstrators in Pokhara for defying a day-time curfew. While there was no curfew in Kathmandu, many citizens were seen stocking up on supplies in advance of a possible curfew on April 20, the announced date for a mass pro-democracy rally called by the Parties. Party leaders predicted that the entire 27-km ring road in Kathmandu would "be jammed" with demonstrators on April 20, even if the government were to declare a curfew. While the Parties planned to demonstrate peacefully on the Ring Road, government sources told us the Maoists intended to attempt to enter the city. The police told us they were given orders to shoot at protesters only in life threatening situations and only after taking a series of other steps to attempt to control and disperse violent protesters. In solidarity with the Parties, private airlines announced they would stop domestic flight operations for one day on April 20. International flights were expected to operate normally. Security forces escorted 26 food and 15 fuel supply trucks into Kathmandu, but supplies remained very low. The government released over 100 detainees per Supreme Court orders, but renewed detention orders for six party and civil society activists detained since January 19. Rumors are flying that the King will address the nation late on April 19, or early April 20. End Summary.

Nationwide Pro-Democracy Protests Continue

2. (C) Pro-democracy protests continued nationwide on April 19, day fourteen of the seven-party alliance general strike. Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in a

number of terai (i.e. southern plains) cities, including Nepalgunj, Butwal, Bhairawa and Bharatpur. Media reported that security forces killed four demonstrators in Jhapa District, in eastern Nepal on April 19. A woman injured in April 18 protests in Nepalgunj reportedly died of her injuries on April 19, bringing the number of general-strike related fatalities to ten (reftel). The April 19 English daily The Himalayan Times carried a headline "106 hurt nationwide" in demonstrations on April 18. In an attempt to control large protests, the government issued an 0800-1900 hours day-time curfew in Pokhara on April 19. Police told us they had arrested more than 250 demonstrators for defying the Pokhara curfew by mid-day on April 19. There was no curfew in Kathmandu, however many people worried the government might impose a curfew on April 20, to deter the planned Parties' mass rally. On April 19, people were out on the streets of Kathmandu stocking up on supplies despite the general strike. Emboffs noted that about half the shops were open, and taxis and motorcycles were on the road, though there were few private vehicles. The second consecutive day of rain in Kathmandu failed to deter protesters, who set fire to at least three vehicles within the city, according to police sources.

Parties Mobilizing Large Numbers for April 20 Rally

13. (C) K.P. Oli, CPN-UML Central Committee member, told Emboff that the seven-party alliance was mobilizing large numbers of pro-democracy supporters to gather at Chabahil, on the Ring Road in Kathmandu on April 20. "No matter if the government announces a curfew, a state of emergency, or whether it rains, nothing will deter people from participating in the April 20 pro-democracy rally," he

continued. Gyanendra Kharki, NC (D) Central Committee member, echoed Oli, explaining that protesters would gather at seven points along the ring road at 1100 or 1200 and converge at Chabahil around 1300. He expected the entire Ring Road to "be jammed with people" on April 20. Kharki could not predict how long the demonstration would continue or if Party leaders would address crowds, as it would "depend on the situation" on the ground. While the Parties planned to demonstrate peacefully on the Ring Road, journalist sources told us the Maoists intended to attempt to enter the city. Oli opined that if any Maoists participated in the rally, they would do so peacefully. Kharki noted that the seven-party alliance Coordination Committee was urging all people to participate and to bring along a friend. To mobilize demonstrators, the Committee called on people to chant pro-democracy slogans for ten minutes in front of their houses at 1900 local time on April 19. Subodh Pyakurel, President of local human rights NGO INSEC, told Emboff that, as INSEC had been doing every day during the general strike, INSEC monitors would be stationed around town on April 20 to monitor the demonstrations. He opined that people would be out in force even if the government issued a curfew or a state of emergency, as the government could not stop the momentum of the people.

Government Rules of Engagement

14. (C) Security force contacts reported that the civil and armed police would be mobilized to control pro-democracy protesters on April 20, with the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) on standby if the situation deteriorated. The rules of engagement for the police would be to escort peaceful protesters entering prohibited areas (within and 200 meters beyond the Ring Road) to an area outside the prohibited area.

If protesters turned violent, then the police would try to control and disperse the crowd with a baton or tear gas. If a life threatening situation arose, then police would fire warning shots. Only if protesters did not respond to warning shots, and it was a life threatening situation, were police authorized to shoot at protesters. Only if the situation deteriorated, or if there was a curfew with shoot-on-sight orders, would the police and armed police be authorized to

open fire into the demonstrators.

In Solidarity, No Domestic Flights On April 20

15. (C) The Airline Operators' Association of Nepal (AOAN) has announced that all AOAN members planned to cease domestic air services on April 20. An AOAN source said, "We are going to stall our operations on April 20 as a gesture of support to

the movement called by the seven political parties." The source said all airlines would resume service on April 21. Birendra Basnet, Managing Director of Buddha Air, told Emboff that "to show solidarity" with the pro-democracy movement they had decided to close on April 20. He explained that the decision to halt operations on April 20 was made at an April 19 meeting held by Arjun Narsingh K.C. of the Nepali Congress (NC) and Subhash Nemwang of the CPN-UML and attended by domestic airline, travel and trekking agencies. He noted that air service was a humanitarian need and thus the airlines agreed they could not engage in an "indefinite strike." International flights were expected to operate normally.

Escorted Trucks Enter Valley, But Shortages Continue

16. (C) An RNA contact confirmed to Emboff that two RNA-escorted convoys arrived in Kathmandu from Birgunj, on the Nepal-Indian border. One convoy arrived on April 18 (reftel) with 11 food trucks, 9 passenger buses, 4 minibuses, and 2 fuel trucks. The second convoy arrived the morning of April 19 with 16 food trucks, 11 fuel trucks, 2 diesel fuel trucks, and 2 passenger buses. The RNA was continuing to escort convoys from Birgunj, up into Kathmandu. The police reported that on the morning of April 19, a convoy of 27

vehicles departed Hetauda (en route to Chitwan), and 30 trucks departed Chitwan bound for Kathmandu. Ikshya Bikram Thapa, Manager of Nepal Oil Corporation's (NOC) Thankot Depot, which stores fuel for the entire Kathmandu Valley, explained to Emboff that under normal conditions there would be daily deliveries of 15 tankers of petrol, 20 tankers of diesel, 22 tankers of kerosene, and 25 tankers of aviation fuel. He noted that these numbers of tankers were roughly equal to the amount needed to meet one day's demand for fuel for the Kathmandu Valley. (Comment: While the convoys are bringing in essential supplies, they are not sufficient to meet daily demand and we expect shortages to continue. End Comment.) Food was available in shops in Kathmandu, but at much higher than normal prices.

Government Releases MK Nepal, But Extends Others' Detentions

17. (C) As the day ended on April 19, the government finally released M.K. Nepal, CPN-UML leader who the government put under house arrest on January 19 and moved to APF detention on March 26, as well as a number of other senior politicians.

However, on April 18, the government extended for three months the detention period of six human rights and political activists originally detained on January 19, including Krishna Pahadi and Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, two leaders of the Citizen's Movement for Peace and Democracy. However, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) confirmed that the government had released at least 100 of the 172 people the Supreme Court ordered released on April 18 (reftel). OHCHR expected the government to release the remaining detainees once the release orders reached the relevant authorities.

Comment

18. (C) The next few days will be a critical time for Nepal. While M.K. Nepal's release is a welcome sign, overnight the number of demonstrators killed since April 6 during the general strike went from five to ten. Tens of thousands of

pro-democracy demonstrators are expected to take to the streets of Kathmandu on April 20, and the news of more deaths could lead to demonstrations getting out of hand. Rumors are flying that the King will address the nation late on April 19, or early April 20.

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